

**University of Windsor
Senate**

5.6: Report of the Academic Colleague

Item for: **Information**

Forwarded by: **Philip Dutton**

Academic Colleagues met in a hybrid format on December 12 and 13, 2023.

Evening meeting, Tuesday, December 12, 2023, 6:00 to 8:30 pm

A land acknowledgement was provided by Dr. Scott Kline.

**A conversation with Dr. James L. Turk, Director, Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University.
Topic: Conversation on Free Expression in Relation to Geopolitical Events**

Executive Heads specifically requested that the Academic Colleagues consider the position of universities regarding significant events and resulting public statements. Professor Turk was invited to inform us and lead a discussion on this controversial issue. In his opening statements he said it is difficult and dangerous to talk about free expression, but it is dangerous not to do so.

A number of universities hit the news for various reasons in relation to the Israeli-Hamas war. One university that did not get into trouble was Stanford, which took the stand that "...as an institution, generally refrain from taking institutional positions on complex political or global matters that extend beyond our immediate purview, which is the operation of the university itself." This position reflects a long standing argument in the academic world going back to the 1960's. I have appended the Kalvin Committee Report that established a relatively common definition of the responsibilities of institutions and the rights and responsibilities and freedoms of individual faculty members. Also appended is an open letter from the Centre for Free Expression to the executive heads of universities and colleges across Canada. These attached documents speak clearly on Professor Turks position and advice on the importance of academic freedom and the responsibility of individual faculty (and students) members to be critical and protected by the institution.

Professor Turk repeatedly emphasized the importance that the university must empower its faculty and students to speak out.

The discussion kept Professor Turk well past his scheduled finish. We talked about the limits to expression, the importance of political expression to democracy, the challenges of censorship, the perceptions and influence of donors, safety and respectful discussion, and the boundaries established by law. I left the meeting with a new respect for the deeper meanings of academic freedom.

Colleagues meeting, Wednesday, December 13, 2023, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

1. Information sharing

The Blue Ribbon Panel report was an general topic of interest for all institutions. While all institutions are feeling a squeeze, some are facing particularly difficult financial and staffing situations. Concerns are generally expressed for deferred maintenance and obvious crumbling infrastructure. Student housing issues and the pressure on small classes and programs were concerning at a number of institutions.

2. Guide to the Not-For Profit Corporations Act. 2010

Colleagues were introduced to a proposed structure for COU governance resulting from not-for-profit legislation. This involves some redefinition of bylaws and constitution of COU. Overall, the COU is trying to maintain current processes as much as possible. There is some implication to voting on the board or board committees as delegates of members will not have a vote.

3. Discussion of Future Topics

Future topics were discussed, and it is likely we will have a conversation with Executive Heads at the spring council meeting about freedom of expression and the institutional rights and responsibilities.

4. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

Respectfully Submitted,

P.J. Dutton, Academic Colleague

Attachments:

Kalven Report (S240112-5.6a)

Open Letter from the Centre for Free Expression (S240112-5.6b)